

The Paper

from the producers of the *IndyBulletin*
Independent Fortnightly News and Opinion

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Free

Inside The Media

The following insight is a contribution from our corporate media mole.

"The media lies - open your eyes"

"Think for yourself but only because we told you to"

"Read Rupert's filth? Never"

These angry expressions about the media were scrawled by protesters outside last year's World Economic Forum in Melbourne.

The distrust they convey of the institutions that bring us "the news" and daily feed us with information is well-known to be shared among the wider community; many surveys have shown that, for trustworthiness, people rank journalists somewhere near used-car salesmen.

I have worked as a journalist on suburban newspapers for the past four years, and as someone who for a decade has also been involved in social justice, environmental and trade union campaigns, have seen the way the media treats people and issues from the other side.

I have come across many public misconceptions about the media and reporters and would like to examine a few of these.

A common misconception is to labour all the responsibility for what has been written in a story to the scribbler whose name appears on the top of it.

It is not unusual for the copy that a journalist writes to be substantially changed either by their editor or a later sub-editor.

Usually this is because something has either not been written well or has factual inaccuracies, but occasionally it is because the text does not fit into an editorial political line.

Former Herald-Sun chief Piers Ackerman was notorious for messing round with reporters' copy to suit his right-wing political agendas. Rupert Murdoch-owned papers, as any issue of the Herald-Sun shows, closely follow the media magnate's social and political views.

A photographer who covered the S11 protests for a Melbourne Murdoch paper told me that scores of photographs he had taken of police beating protesters never made print and only a few, approved "scuffle shots" did.

Perhaps surprisingly, staff at the Herald-Sun and most other newspapers I know tend to lean politically to the left and resent their copy being changed. This is one reason why many journalists become cynical and why some of the most creative people resign, leaving their paper to the hacks who faithfully toe the editorial line.

Another misunderstanding I have come across is the notion of "lazy journalism". This is meant reporters who do their interviews

mostly over the phone and rarely get out of the office, and stories that are written almost verbatim from press releases.

I have not in my time in the industry come across anyone who just slothfully sat around in their job, but I and many others are guilty of these examples of laziness. The problem lies in chronic understaffing across the entire profession, forcing ever-greater workloads on reporters.

Profit-driven pressures compel management to cut staffing hours, lay off casual employees and cut other costs; corners being cut by management inevitably leads to journalists doing the same. Quality journalism can only flourish in an atmosphere where reporters have control over their workplace and their work and have the necessary time and resources.

Other public misconceptions or misunderstandings centre around the amount of freedom reporters have to write what they want.

I am often asked about the extent to which an editor dictates the content of my stories. Usually an edi-



Australia has one of the highest concentrations of media ownership in the world

tor does not need to direct a journalist about a particular story because the reporter already knows what is wanted.

They know the writing style of the paper, its "culture" or political outlook and how to go about getting a story. Successful journalists internalise the demands of the industry and are able to meet those demands, knowing what can and can't be written.

For instance, in the commercial media there is no freedom of self-criticism.

A critical interview like the one former Media Watch presenter Paul Barry had with ABC chairman Donald McDonald last year could never have happened on a commercial TV channel.

Barry had the guts to grill his boss about issues that were important to ABC viewers and staff, and believes he was sacked because of it.

It only takes foresight to know that a Channel 9 reporter roasting Kerry Packer or someone from The Australian getting stuck into Murdoch would mean that reporter losing their job. Journalism, especially in the commercial media, is about what you can report within certain boundaries.

Of course, this should lead us all to continue hollering for diversity of media-ownership and more resources for the ABC; and developing more independent, non-commercial media spaces.

News from around the World

WEF Attempts to Overturn Constitutional Rights

In preparation for the upcoming World Economic Forum meeting in Davos, Switzerland, the anti-World Trade Organization coordination committee formally submitted a request for a demonstration permit from the local authorities. Although they were initially denied the permit, the group successfully challenged the refusal in the Swiss Federal court, where the denial was overturned, acknowledging an absence of valid arguments for the permit's denial. Despite having the permit, local government, police, banking institutions,

and the WEF are trying to create a total prohibition of any type of protest demonstration. The WEF meeting is scheduled for 25th of Jan.

Another Vietnam

This month, the US will start its grand War-Against-Drugs campaign, Plan Colombia. This huge military operation is aimed at stopping the flow of drugs from Colombia to the United States. Five hundred American troops are already in Colombia 'assisting' an army that has one of the world's worst human rights records. The US is also sending massive amounts of military sup-

plies and equipment, including 30 Black Hawk helicopters. But not all of the money being thrown at the Colombian government will end up in the military coffers. Massive aerial spraying of glyphosate (the active ingredient in the commercial herbicide "Roundup") in guerrilla-controlled coca regions is due to commence next month, and Monsanto, the company which produced Agent Orange used during the Vietnam War, is sure to be the major supplier of the herbicide.

Depleted Uranium

In a ground-breaking policy change,

the Ministry of Defence is set to announce that medical tests will be carried out on tens of thousands of Gulf and Balkan military veterans, to check for possible contamination caused by depleted uranium shells used by British and allied forces.

Depleted uranium has been a source of controversy for more than a decade amid claims that its contamination of Gulf war battlefields caused widespread cancer among Iraqi civilians and contributed to health problems among allied military veterans. Both the UK and US governments maintain that depleted uranium does not cause ill health

effects and cancers. A spokesman for the UK ministry of defense said "It is toxic [depleted uranium] in much the same way that lead is toxic, and it has a very low level of radiation. In its solid form it poses no great risk"

Israel's Deliberate Execution Policy Hits Known Palestinian Peace Champion

Sunday, the last day of the year 2000, an Israeli killer squad hit and killed a well-known Palestinian peace champion, the director general of the health inspection department Dr.

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A Hundred Years Of What?

RICHARD PILSKALNS

In the midst of commemorating the centenary of 'Federation', that great myth-making exercise 'celebrating' 100 years of the Anglo-Australian nation, advertisements have sprung up in mainstream media encouraging us to reflect upon "what kind of country we want for the future." After all, as the spin goes: "Australia - it's what we make it."

Naturally, this "celebration of a nation" appears as little more than a propagandist exercise, likely aimed at re-consolidating "values consensus" (itself a handy myth) amongst the diverse national communities that make the alleged corner-stones of our (paradoxically presented as both multicultural and homogenous) national self-concept. Concomittant to this cynical legitimisation is of course, the act of

deflecting and distracting public discourse from cultural matters genuinely deserving of our scrutiny, contemplation and criticism.

However despite this, one would suggest that progressive elements of society should take greater advantage of the "reflections" being encouraged - participate in shaping and steering the discourse offered, in order to further raise awareness of issues relevant to social justice, for example.

One of these issues must surely be the very gulf itself between our propagated self-image, and the social reality of this country we live in.

I believe humanist psychologists call it 'incongruence'; the psychic phenomenon of one's observed actions being dissonant to one's self-image. As a country,

Australia's national self-image, our 'cultural self' if you like, is constructed around notions of justice, egalitarianism, freedom and a 'fair go'. However, as alluded to earlier, our observable actions seem to tell quite a different story to these espousedly cherished values.

After claiming this country 'Terra Nullius' over two centuries ago, the Crown set about settling the land, systematically dispossessing and subjugating its original inhabitants. This persecution was manifest in both cultivating ethnocentric cultural attitudes and, at times was written into official State policy. Yet the elected leader of this country to this day continues to decline to give so much as an official apology to a people whose disadvantage the State as an historical institution has been largely responsible for creating. Where's the 'justice' there?

The policy of arbitrary, long-term detention for asylum seekers on the grounds of insufficient documentation is another prime example of incongruence. The nature of this policy can be allegorised by recalling that sinister old war-movie line, "Your papers are not in order!". Unfortunately for our self-image, policies such as mandatory detention (and mandatory sentencing, for that matter) bear stronger resemblance to fascism than to any allusions to freedom and a 'fair go'.

Then there's our Foreign Minister strongly urging small states not to seek independence from their colonial overlords (such as West Papua from Indonesia). Are 'warnings' such as this even appropriate, let alone 'egalitarian'?

Examples of a patent and prolonged 'incongruence,' a dissonance between our national self-

concept and our societal reality, abound. This condition begs a careful re-assessment of our cultural identity - indeed a questioning of ourselves. One may suggest that we have several courses of action available to us. One course would be to begin revising our cherished national self-image to be more in keeping with our institutionalised social reality. Another, to revise the entrusted roles and virtues of those we invest with the power to affect social policy and cultural representations on our national behalf. Perhaps we could try a little of both?

For until this process of reflection and revision is well underway, we as a society will continue to practise a foolish self-deception, and the rest of the world will continue to rightly view us as a nation of manifest hypocrisy.

Remembering Genocide Corner

PHIL BRADLEY

In Adelaide on December 16th 2000, Arabunna elder Kevin Buzzacott led a rally from the Supreme Court to what has been dubbed 'Genocide Corner'; the public lawn outside the State Governor's House.

The rally was in response to the uranium mining giant Western Mining Corporation (WMC) destroying for the second time the Arabunna Going Home Camp located on the Oodnadatta Track opposite Lake Eyre South in South Australia.

The camp was originally established in March 1999 for the purpose of peace and reconciliation and to bring attention to WMC drawing 42 million litres of water per day from the Great Artesian basin for the processing of uranium oxide. In recent years, mound springs in the Arabunna area, which bubble up the 200 million year old water, have been dying out due to reduced pressure in the basin.

Under traditional Arabunna law, Mr Buzzacott is required to protect his country and has spent his life dedicated to this cause.

"I been in court, High Court, low court, all the courts and I haven't won. None of us have won, no blackfella has won in that system. It's always we being the victims, we being locked behind bars, we being in gaol and that's it. We're jobless, homeless, whatever. These fellas (in power) have got it all but their

day is coming" Mr Buzzacott stated.

Mr Buzzacott set up the Camp calling for the Arabunna to return to their land. He also invited anyone who wanted to learn about his country to join him at the Camp.

The Camp was first destroyed by WMC in co-operation with local police on December 6th 1999. In response to this, Kevin Buzzacott confronted the Supreme Court on December 16th, for a ruling on the genocide case he had been fighting against WMC.

After no response from the Supreme Court he took his case to the Governor of South Australia, Sir Eric Neal. He and thirty others walked down King William Street, one of the major streets in the city, carrying a banner, which read: ADELAIDE THE GENOCIDE TOWN.

The Governor refused to see him, so Mr Buzzacott set up camp on the lawn outside the front gates. This location became known as Genocide Corner. Four ceremonial fires for peace were lit over the following 21 days, all of which were extinguished by the Adelaide City Council and police. The mainstream media failed to adequately report the background or the purpose of the camp.

On January 6th 2000, Genocide Corner Camp was forcibly removed by over 50 police, including the State's paramilitary Star Force.

On the 26th of March 2000 the Arabunna Going Home Camp was re-established on the shores of Lake Eyre South and maintained as a permanent presence even during the three-month walk from Lake Eyre South to Sydney. Known as 'Walking The Land - For Our Ancient Right', it was led by Kevin Buzzacott and involved hundreds of people journeying to Sydney.

On November 11th, 2000, the Camp was destroyed for the second time by WMC while its residents were visiting friends down the road.

As well as raising awareness of the Camp's destruction, the rally on the 16th of December 2000 marks the first anniversary of Genocide Corner. Aboriginal lawyer Dr Irene Watson spoke at the rally, explaining how the Governor's House was constructed of stone from a Kaurna sacred site.

"There's a big sorry story here with



Arabunna Elder Kevin Buzzacott at Genocide Corner Rally

just this house here, and all of their institutions which set themselves up and call themselves lawful institutions... I hope we can one day turn it around and make it a better story for our kids."

More actions are planned by the Keepers of Lake Eyre for March

2001 to commemorate the beginning of the Arabunna Going Home Camp.

For more information:
<http://www.lakeeyre.green.net.au>

The Paper needs your financial support to keep going. If you enjoyed what you read and feel you can assist, please contact us.
PO Box 1733, Collingwood, VIC 3066. thepaper@disinfo.net www.onlinecide.org/thepaper/

Welcome to Edition Three of The Paper, a new independent fortnightly newspaper dedicated to topical issues and current happenings.

The Paper is gaining momentum and is quickly developing a network of willing contributors. Thanks to all who have offered support. We have set up an e-list for all prospective contributors, and encourage anyone interested in writing for us to join up.

Recently, we have received a lot of contributions along the lines of social/environmental commentary and analysis. Societal (self) criticism seems to be an area that a lot of people feel is not adequately touched on by mainstream media.

While more commercial media outlets aim to help create, endorse and stabilise the status quo, we're hoping to encourage argument, and provide a refreshing change from the overwhelming corporate-led push towards conformity of dress, lifestyle and opinion.

Constructive argument helps us to more clearly formulate and articulate our opinions. It encourages diversity: the most powerful tool that the people have against corporate agendas. By keeping our opinions and free and changeable, we become a complex puzzle for big business, rather than an homogenous, marketable mass.

Our next mission is to include a responses/letters to the author section, so that readers can freely express their opinions on the presentation of issues in The Paper. So, if you have a different take on any of the articles in this edition, please address your responses to: thepaper@disinfo.net (or to our PO Box details on page 2)

And don't forget, if you can assist financially, we would really appreciate your contributions.

Thanks for reading The Paper. Enjoy!

The Editors

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Zapatista Struggle Continues

JASON GIBSON

The Zapatista Army of National Liberation (EZLN) has cautiously welcomed a withdrawal of troops from Mexico's Chiapas region over the last month. Although progress has been made with the newly elected Mexican leadership, crucial steps toward resuming peace talks are yet to be taken.

Located in the south-eastern corner of Mexico and comprised mainly of Mexico's Indigenous peoples, Chiapas has been a hotbed of political struggle since a Zapatista uprising 7 years ago. Fighting for Indigenous self-determination and common land ownership, the EZLN seized the town of San Cristobal on Jan 1st 1994. Spooking foreign investors who had grown confident in the stability of Mexico's economic progress the uprising sparked a harsh reaction for the ruling Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI).

Since that time a low intensity war, exacerbated by the formation of paramilitary groups backed by landowners and ranchers, has resulted in widespread persecution of Zapatistas and their supporters. Amidst this endemic violence 'autonomous communities' have been established, running their own schools and farms as well as electing their own leaders.

In state elections held last year, the PRI lost control of the presidency, the Mexican congress and the governorship of Chiapas. The election of new president Vincent Fox and new governor of Chiapas, Pablo Salazar Mendiguchia, has opened

up opportunities for an end to the PRI-sanctioned conflict.

Both the new government and the EZLN agree that the resumption of peace talks which were stalled in 1996 after 'The San Andreas Peace Accord', need to be resumed. Hours after Fox took office on December 1st he ordered the closing of 53 military checkpoints and later sent an Indian rights Bill to congress. 2,200 troops have also been withdrawn from the region although there are an estimated 50,000 to 100,000 still remaining. Soon after Fox's actions Sub-commandant Marcos of the EZLN, publicly stated that the Zapatistas were ready to return to peace talks with the government. Since then, seventeen Zapatista activists have been released by the Mexican authorities, and Salazar has claimed that another 78 Zapatista prisoners will be released over the next few months. According to President Fox the military will remain in Mexico's troubled districts to fight drug smuggling along its southern border with Guatemala.

However, violence and intimidation persist under the new leadership, with nine Zapatista support base families having to take to the mountains after threats from PRI militants only weeks ago.

In San Cristobal De Las last week, Indigenous people of the Chiapas highlands, most of them Tzotzil Indians, cut electric power to the military base and toppled two parabolic antennas, cutting off communications. The departure of troops from this base, reported in American press as a gesture of



peace from Fox, was in fact initiated entirely by the Zapatista supporters. It was from this base, in 1995 and 1996, that the Mexican military occupied the highlands using the pretext of marijuana eradication against the drug-and-alcohol-free indigenous communities.

Sub-commandant Marcos has said that the EZLN would return to negotiations with the government only after certain conditions had been met. "Despite a lavish government publicity campaign, nothing has changed" Marcos said. Included in the Zapatista demands are a complete withdrawal of troops and the disablement of paramilitary groups within the

Chiapas region.

A Zapatista delegation is scheduled to travel to Mexico City in February of this year. According to a communiqué from the General Command of the EZLN, the trip to Mexico city "will take place regardless of whether or not the dialogue with the federal government has been resumed", in hope of re-igniting peace talks and reversing the militarisation that has been used to intimidate the rebellion since 1994.

References:
www.eco.utexas.edu/faculty/Cleaver/chiapas95.html
www.zmag.org/

Reconciliation - A Long Way To Go

ANDY GOUGH

John Howard is to be applauded for his stance on reconciliation. Not because an apology is not in order or that reconciliation with the traditional owners of this country is not an important, (if not the most important,) issue for Australia, but because it reveals his true feelings on the issue. And because no apology is better than a fraudulent one.

Through recent research, I have learned more about Aboriginal history than I ever did in my high school textbooks. Aboriginal people have been systematically annihilated and persecuted since white man landed in this 'lucky' country. Although in different ways to the blatant genocide of hunting parties and slavery, this per-

secution continues today. Embezzlement of funds dedicated to Aboriginal people, mineral exploration and mining leases, mandatory sentencing laws and an inability to provide an Aboriginal interpreter service are all indications of white man's continued oppression of Aboriginal people today.

In the Northern Territory, Aboriginal relations have hardly progressed in 200 years. On the face of things, Aboriginal people provide tourism dollars, and Aboriginal culture is embraced as a 'marketable commodity'. While there is a dollar to be made, everyone is happy, especially the CLP. But contrast that with recent reports of abysmal performance in Aboriginal education, and continued poor health and employ-

ment statistics. Alcoholism and domestic violence are rife and getting worse, and of course the Stolen Generation 'never happened'. The genocide continues.

No, John Howard and all his Liberal colleagues will not endorse reconciliation if an apology is due. Why should this or any government feel responsible for the slaughter and dispossession of Aboriginal society? Perhaps they would rather wait until the technology is available to clone Governor Phillip, bring him back to life and put him on trial for crimes against humanity.

Howard is not sorry that the government stands to make millions from uranium mining on Aboriginal land. Senator Hill will make sure of that.

He is not sorry that Aboriginal people are incarcerated at a much higher rate than other Australians, Mr. Stone will make sure of that. He is not sorry that countless children were taken from their rightful families and culture and placed into situations of neglect and abuse under 'superior' white guardianship. He stands by his conviction.

Good on you, Johnny. You have taken a stand that shows you up for the true man that you are. To make the apology would be simple. It might even fool a few people. But I have to say 'good for you' when you can stand firm and tell the people of Australia what an ignorant bigot you really are, and be proud of it.

News from the World
continued from page 1...

Thabet Thabet (49), who was also the local secretary of a (Arafat led) Fatah PLO branch. This assassination was in line with the escalating policy of deliberate executions of Palestinians, suspected by the Israeli security services to be leaders of the legitimate popular uprising against Israeli occupation.

The number of palestinian's killed by Israel's hit-and-kill death squads in the West Bank and Gaza during the last few weeks count to more than a dozen.

Nigerian Military Opens Fire on Youths After Shell Oil Spill
Shell has once again been accused of collusion with the Nigerian military in violently suppressing oil and land-rights protests. On August 6 2000, an

oil spill occured at one of Shell's wells. The spill covered the near-by river, affecting transportation and destroying aquatic life and mangroves. The next morning, local people notified Shell of the spill and the destruction to the surrounding ecosystem. Five youths were selected to present the report but officials informed the youths t to return the next day for an inspection. The youths returned the next day to

the site and while they were waiting on premises of Shell, the head of the naval personnel, a sub-lieutenant, came and ordered them to leave immediately "or be ready to be killed.". When the youths refused to leave, and the officer went into an office and retrieved a grenade which was thrown at the youths. The explosion was followed by gun fire. "As we ran, we heard gunfire and the order of 'Shoot them! Shoot them!'" said

one of the youths. Four persons sustained serious bullet wounds and the others received injuries from the surrounding mangrove vegetation. A senior official of Shell said that Shell did not order the shooting of the youths but that it was a Nigerian government's directive to the Navy to shoot non-Shell staff on sight.

www.indymedia.org for more....

Who's to Blame for Climate Change? - A Distracting Debate

RICHARD PILSKALNS

It has been estimated that since the beginning of the Industrial Revolution, the atmospheric concentration of green-house gases (the main culprit, CO₂) has nearly doubled. It has been claimed that the Arctic polar ice has thinned by 40% over the last 35 years. It has been asserted that the 1990s was the hottest decade in the last millennium.

Throughout, the debate as to whether global warming is some 'natural' phenomenon, or has been induced by the interference of

industrial society, has been a hotly contested one (forgive the pun). The 'middle ground' would assert a combination of the two.

With half the world's original forest cover gone in the last 40 years, with the average Australian responsible for some 22 tonnes of carbon-dioxide per year, it requires an ever-more concerted and sophisticated public relations spin (and supply of plain misinformation) on the part of industry and government alike to prop up our collective 'bad faith'. To assist us in denying the uncomfortable (and unprofitable) reality that we're surely headed for global ecological

and social catastrophe unless we commit ourselves to radical and profound societal changes, in both our living patterns (such as energy use and consumption levels) and cherished cultural values (such as unbridled consumerism!)

Whether or not climate change is 'natural' or human-induced is somewhat a moot point - for we now know that irrespective of the relative percentages, we are contributing to warming in no insignificant fashion. Thus, if we are the cause, then it is incumbent upon us to change our ways. Similarly, if the earth is undergoing a 'natural' warming, then it is even more

imperative that we reduce our complicity in this process.

Either way, we no longer have the leisure of 'generations' in which to sort ourselves out. Climate change is real, and without a swift, genuine and profound shift toward ecologically sustainable ethics and lifestyles (especially in the so-called 'developed' industrialised countries), the coming century shall remember our current ecological concerns and societal dystopias as but a tragic preamble to the main event.

A Cold War for the New Century

The United States National Missile Defence (NMD), also known as 'Star Wars' will be advanced by the incoming Bush administration.

Following is an extract from a media release put out jointly by the Australian Peace Committee, People for Nuclear Disarmament WA and Friends of the Earth. It calls on our Federal Government to reject the United States National Missile Defence:

National Missile Defence would involve a multi-billion dollar program to expand a nuclear defence

shield. The program attempts to defend the US against a threat that is either non-existent or else better dealt with in other ways, and that threatens to re-ignite global nuclear arms-racing.

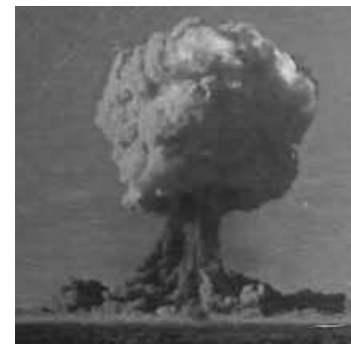
Russia and China have reacted to the US moves with indications that if NMD proceeds, they will increase their own nuclear weapons systems.

Currently, there are still some 5,600 land-based strategic nuclear warheads on permanent launch-on-warning status, and a much larger number of submarine-based,

bomber-based and tactical warheads in the US and Russian arsenals - quite enough to incinerate the entire planet by accident or miscalculation. If NMD proceeds, instead of eliminating these as the nuclear powers are legally obligated to do, there will be more and more of them and the danger to human civilization and survival will grow and not decline.

NMD has been opposed by Nobel laureates, by 354 NGO's worldwide, by the Australian Senate, and by all US allies except Australia. Australia should have the good sense to join with Germany,

France, and other US allies and urge that the US not proceed. We should all Just Say No to the United States National Missile Defence.



Defending missiles with missiles

It's Davos Time Again

From the 25 to 30 January. The World Economic Forum's annual meeting will bring together 2000 of the most richest men (and a some women) to discuss a "Framework for Our Global Future".

The WEF claim to be entering a period of "unprecedented opportunity while confronting daunting challenges". That's why they are proud to have 59 representatives of civil society (13 up from last year) attending their meeting. These representatives will participate in panels such as "The Future of the Multilateral Trade System" and "The Opposition is the People".

This year, the WEF will also be publishing a newspaper each day of the meeting called Forum News Daily. This will be a "record of the Davos summit". Maybe they got the idea from the IndyBulletin, the paper published during the S11 protests when the WEF visited Melbourne last September.

The Anti-WTO Co-ordination of Switzerland appears to be one of the main groups planning actions against the WEF. It will be taking a confrontational position to the WEF, which excludes both dialogue and any form of lobbying.

The WEF say it will be "relying on the Swiss authorities to take appropriate security measures to ensure that Annual Meeting 2001 in Davos proceeds in a safe, secure and orderly manner".

The Anti-WTO Co-ordination group points out that the massive police and military operations accompanying the meeting is the answer the WEF and the corporate elite has to the critical voices that refuse both to be integrated and to serve the public relations strategies of those in power.

The New Democracy?

Excerpts from "The Joy of Revolution."

Roughly speaking we can distinguish five degrees of "government":

- (1) Unrestricted freedom
- (2) Direct democracy
- (3) Delegate democracy
- (4) Representative democracy
- (5) Overt minority dictatorship

The present society oscillates between (4) and (5), i.e. between overt minority rule and covert minority rule camouflaged by a facade of token democracy. A liberated society would eliminate (4) and (5) and would progressively reduce the need for (2) and (3).

In representative democracy people abdicate their power to elected officials. The candidates' stated policies are limited to a few vague generalities, and once they are elected there is little control over their actual decisions on hundreds of issues -- apart from the feeble

threat of changing one's vote, a few years later, to some equally uncontrollable rival politician. Representatives are dependent on the wealthy for bribes and campaign contributions; they are subordinate to the owners of the mass media, who decide which issues get the publicity; and they are almost as ignorant and powerless as the general public regarding many important matters that are determined by unelected bureaucrats and independent secret agencies. Overt dictators may sometimes be overthrown, but the real rulers in "democratic" regimes, the tiny minority who own or control virtually everything, are never voted in and never voted out. Most people don't even know who they are. . . .

In itself, voting is of no great significance one way or the other (those who make a big deal about refusing to vote are only revealing their own fetishism). The problem is that it tends to lull people into relying on others to act for them,

distracting them from more significant possibilities. A few people who take some creative initiative (think of the first civil rights sit-ins) may ultimately have a far greater effect than if they had put their energy into campaigning for lesser-evil politicians. At best, legislators rarely do more than what they have been forced to do by popular movements. A conservative regime under pressure from independent radical movements often concedes more than a liberal regime that knows it can count on radical support. If people invariably rally to lesser evils, all the rulers have to do in any situation that threatens their power is to conjure up a threat of some greater evil.

Even in the rare case when a "radical" politician has a realistic chance of winning an election, all the tedious campaign efforts of thousands of people may go down the drain in one day because of some trivial scandal discovered in

his personal life, or because he inadvertently says something intelligent. If he manages to avoid these pitfalls and it looks like he might win, he tends to evade controversial issues for fear of antagonizing swing voters. If he actually gets elected he is almost never in a position to implement the reforms he has promised, except perhaps after years of wheeling and dealing with his new colleagues; which gives him a good excuse to see his first priority as making whatever compromises are necessary to keep himself in office indefinitely. Hobnobbing with the rich and powerful, he develops new interests and new tastes, which he justifies by telling himself that he deserves a few perks after all his years of working for good causes. Worst of all, if he does eventually manage to get a few "progressive" measures passed, this exceptional and usually trivial success is held up as evidence of the value of relying on electoral politics, luring many more people into wasting

their energy on similar campaigns to come.

As one of the May 1968 graffiti put it, "It's painful to submit to our bosses; it's even more stupid to choose them!"

The complete "Joy of Revolution" can be found at:

<http://www.slip.net/~knabb/PS/joyrev1.htm>

The Bureau of Public Secrets website features Ken Knabb's translations from the Situationist International (the notorious group that helped trigger the May 1968 revolt in France) plus Knabb's own writings and comics on Wilhelm Reich, Kenneth Rexroth, Gary Snyder, radical Buddhists, Chinese anarchists, the Iranian uprising, the Gulf war, etc. The site index includes over 2000 name and topic entries, from anarchism to Zen.

<http://www.slip.net/~knabb/index1.htm>